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ABSTRACT

Eduard Lindeman's only book about adult education was published in 1926; nevertheless, it contains many insights that are still relevant today. Lindeman, who was consciously a social philosopher, had four main ideas about adult education. First, education is life--not mere preparation for an unknown kind of future living. Second, adult education revolves around nonvocational ideals. Third, the approach to adult education should be via the route of situations, not subjects. Finally, the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience. Lindeman had explicit messages concerning the adult education curriculum. He would have adult educators remove all value distinctions between credit and noncredit work and would tap life situations as the starting point for adult learning. Lindeman was one of the first Americans to articulate the concept of teaching as the facilitation of learning. In the area of public policy toward adult education, it is likely that Lindeman would urge adult educators and their clients alike to prod public and private agencies to do more adult education, encourage policies to facilitate voluntary adult learning, and not encourage formal, credit-based system of adult education at the expense of informal or noncredit learning. (MN)

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EDUARD LINDEMAN'S AGENDA FOR ADULT EDUCATORS

Speech at Social Philosophy Luncheon
Annual Meeting
American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
Milwaukee, November 8, 1985

In commemoration of Eduard Lindeman's Centennial Year

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Consultant in Adult and Higher Education
Washington, D.C.

Note: This speech is based upon content of a forthcoming book by David W. Stewart entitled, Adult Learning in America: Eduard Lindeman and His Agenda for Lifelong Education, scheduled for publication by Krieger Publishing Company, Melbourne, Florida, 1986.

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D Stewart

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

In mid-1926, Eduard Lindeman closeted himself in the third-floor study of Greystone, his home in High Bridge, New Jersey, to commence work on his first (and only) book about adult education. He had plenty of ideas. They had been brewing for years, and in committing them to paper, he followed Walt Whitman's advice and let himself go free. He finished in a few short weeks. Nothing was rewritten, and if the result was something less than a polished narrative, then so be it as far as Lindeman was concerned. And it was.

As a piece of English composition, the manuscript that Lindeman sent to his publisher is not very good if measured by conventional standards. The narrative lurches, rambles, and doubles back upon itself as it unfolds in ten often curiously titled chapters and a ramshackle "Postscript." Ideas popping up in the text often have only tenuous connections to the announced subject matter. It's called The Meaning of Adult Education; yet it lacks even a definition of adult education.

There was a rash of books about adult education published at about the same time in the 1920's, but not one of them has left the mark on the minds of adult educators that this one has. So what is it about this strange little volume that gives it staying power?

I think first of all, The Meaning of Adult Education is poetic. It sings along. Flashes of insight ignite the imagination. The author's profoundly optimistic view of the potentials of human life is infectious. One senses the ring of truth and become emotionally engaged. To be sure, parts of the book are abstruse, but somehow in the broadest sense, it just feels right.

I read it for the first time at one sitting and found myself about midway turning to the frontispiece to see if this book had indeed been published in 1926. It had been, but it sounded so contemporary.

I found myself wondering what kind of man it was who wrote this book. And eventually the curiosity became so insatiable that I began reading his other work and learning all that I could about his life. I have, in all, spent more than five years with Lindeman as my close companion. I've read all that he ever wrote; I've read all that has been written about him; I've read almost all that he read before he wrote what he wrote about adult education. I've poured over many of his speeches and a lot of his personal and professional correspondence. And I can tell you that it has been the most exciting and rewarding intellectual adventure of my life. I'm a different person, and I hope a better person, after encountering Eduard Lindeman. This man, whose centennial birth year is being celebrated here, is a worthy ancestor for those of us in search of our roots in adult education. We can be very proud that he was one of us—as we are.

It is unfortunate that The Meaning of Adult Education is the only book about adult education that Eduard Lindeman wrote though he turned out, in all, some 12 books and 406 journal articles between 1915 and his death in 1953. And all of these are mere outcroppings of a vast store of unpublished musings that appear in what he called his "scrapbooks". The Meaning of Adult Education, insightful though it is, does not represent the mature thinking of Eduard

Lindeman about what should be the nature and purpose of American adult education.

Eduard Lindeman was consciously a social philosopher. He was in the business of thinking about adult education, but he was also by his own assertion in the business of using adult education theory. As a social philosopher, he was willing and indeed anxious to put wisdom to the test--and to insert his values in what he called "equations of action." There was no gap between theory and practice in Lindeman's mind. His writings and speeches are full of references to the practical uses of philosophy.

As I was thinking about what might be most appropriate for me to share with you today, the choice was not hard to make. I'm going to say something about where I think we can or do use Eduard Lindeman's philosophy in practice today — and it certainly says something about Eduard Lindeman's influence upon us that there are plenty of examples that can be cited.

I believe it is a mistake, generally, to begin analysis of Lindeman's philosophy with the second level of logic that is represented in The Meaning of Adult Education, and by that I mean his forays into adult education as it is manifest within such concepts as power, intelligence, self-expression, freedom, art, collectivism, and specialization. Rational analysis tends to founder in this morass. I prefer to start at a lower level, that is, the level of his assumptions.

There are four of them: First, education is life--not mere preparation for an unknown kind of future living. Second, adult education revolves around non-vocational ideals. Third, the approach to adult education should be via the route of situations, not subjects. Fourth, the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience.

These bedrock philosophical underpinnings came from two principal sources. The first is rooted in pragmatism--not the garden variety but the formal philosophical school developed by John Dewey within a context earlier defined by William James and Charles Sanders Peirce, among others. The second aggregation of key roots came from the philosophy and practice of the Nineteenth Century Danish philosopher-theologian-educator Nikolai Grundtvig. Lindeman also owed a heavy philosophical debt to Ralph Waldo Emerson but this is seldom explicit except in writings that appeared after The Meaning of Adult Education was published.

Education is life. On its face, this statement seems nonsensical, and when Lindeman goes on to say "education is life and life is education", he doesn't really help. What he meant essentially is that education is not preparation for life; properly conceived it is life or more precisely, "a process coterminous with life." Everyone learns as part of living. Self-evident as that truth might be, we all know it has been and is ignored in the design of many programs of education for adults who want to be learners.

Lindeman's second assumption, namely that adult education revolves around nonvocational ideals is much misunderstood. And this is one of the areas where a reading of The Meaning of Adult Education is insufficient for gaining an

understanding of Lindeman's position. He did not mean to denigrate vocational education. He did want to separate himself from the notion that men and women were functions and not persons—with adult education being a process by which people could be trained to fill various job slots. It was his way of saying that education ought to aim at fitting the world to people, rather than at fitting people to the world. The province of adult education would be what lies beyond vocational training -- and, for that matter, academic education. The purpose of adult education was to put meaning into the whole of life -- so it is life studies that start with the person's concept of what he or she is and wants to be that should be the focus of adult learning.

So let me at this point take the liberty of amending this assumption of Lindeman's so that it more accurately reflects the philosophy of his later years. The revised assumption may then be stated in this way: Adult education revolves around nonvocational and nonacademic ideals. Vocational education and academic education might be subsumed in particular programs of adult education, but adult education itself would evolve from life-centered ideals.

The third assumption is that the approach to education should be via the route of situations, not subjects. The adult finds himself or herself in specific situations with respect to work, family life, community-life, etc. These situations call for adjustments—which can at their highest be spurts of growth. Adult education begins here as the individual learns how constructively to confront such situations. The situation comes first. The subject matter comes later.

The fourth and last assumption is that the learner's experience is the resource of highest value in adult education. If this is true, then experience is "the adult learner's living textbook." Adult experience is "there waiting to be appropriated," as Lindeman put it. At the core of this assumption is the pragmatic view that ideas are true if they can be experienced as being true.

So, let's say we share these assumptions, as some of us today do. If we really believe them to be true, where do they take us? Let me give you some examples, and I will cite them within categories that are frequently used when we talk about practice: those of the adult learner, curriculum, the teaching-learning transaction, institutions and agencies of education, and public policy governing education.

First, the adult learner—and here Lindeman meant everyone, not just those considered educable in any classic sense. If we are adult educators in the Lindeman tradition, how do we treat our clients? Well, first of all we treat them as human beings, not as functions, as numbers, or even as the welcome precipitate of demographic change. We're talking about human beings, and as human beings they deserve access to the kinds of learning experiences that can help them become fully human. And that means every kind of learning experience, not just those offered by traditional academic or vocational training institutions.

Lindeman was big on teaching people to learn how to learn also. "The educated person," he said, "is one to whom a valid learning method has become so natural and congenial that he applies educational method to all the affairs of his

experience."

About curriculum, Lindeman's message is quite explicit. If we are in his tradition, we'll certainly remove value distinctions between credit and noncredit work. Any type of content should be respected. (I wouldn't say this in just every forum, but I believe that Lindeman would value basketweaving, macrame, or any other type of avocational or recreational courses right along with astrophysics.) He says we should rejoice every time someone wants to learn—provided, I suppose, it's not Burglary 101. In a true learning society, we'll create better persons and a better world.

Lindeman would approve of our contemporary efforts to tap life situations as the starting point for adult learning. Crisis situations or "tensions" as Lindeman termed them back in 1929 are in reality "educational opportunities." It's hardly a new idea, if you go back to Lindeman, to build adult learning around such major change events as marriage, parenthood, divorce, occupational change, illness, the midlife crisis. Lindeman valued subject-matter learning, but felt that a parallel approach stemming from the assumption that learning should follow from life, rather than from subject matter, should be tried.

He extended this idea to incorporate societal problems. He thought adult educators in their work with groups should begin "where the people's worries begin." Unemployment, racial tensions,—every type of social or group problem should be attacked with relevant adult learning programs. He even went so far as to believe that "all successful adult education groups sooner or later become social action groups." The progression was inevitable. It follows that we're in the Lindeman tradition—and also going with the flow according to his lights--whenever we work with groups of citizens to help them participate intelligently in problem-resolution endeavors.

There is one aspect of Lindeman's beliefs about curriculum that we grossly neglect these days—and perhaps one reason we do is that Lindeman didn't really develop this point until after he wrote The Meaning of Adult Education. As he became familiar, and enthralled, with the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lindeman acquired a passionate belief in adult education as the lifeblood of American democracy. A democracy wasn't going to work unless its citizens worked at the democratic process, and he believed that adult learning was the chief instrument for achieving this purpose. Lindeman went so far as to advocate that adult educators routinely build into their programs components designed to serve the values of democracy. I think we have a ways to go with that aspect of Lindeman's philosophy.

Eduard Lindeman had a great deal to say about the nature of the teaching-learning transaction in adult education. Lindeman was one of the first Americans to articulate the concept of teaching as the facilitation of learning. Helping students toward "finding things out," as he called it, was superior to a method aimed at "putting things over." It follows in logic that the teaching-learning transaction should be considered democratic territory. Adult learners have rights, but also responsibilities, that are comparable to those of the learning facilitator.

We adult educators are in Lindeman's philosophical corner when we put

experience to work in any adult learning situation. The teacher "who does not know how to elicit experience data and put it to work in problem-solving will never become a genuine adult teacher." Those are Lindeman's words.

Lindeman believed that experience enriches or even makes possible a true learning situation. And while he separated academic education from his concept of adult education, he would certainly look with favor, I think, upon contemporary efforts to build experience into traditional academic programs. I refer here to assessment and awarding of credit for prior college-level experiential learning, to development of contract learning, and the various programs combining work and learning. He would also encourage our efforts to provide individualized instruction that takes into account the experience and needs of adult learners.

Lindeman could be rather hard on the institutions and agencies that served as purveyors of education in his day—including his own home base which was the School of Social Work at Columbia University. But he didn't just criticize; he had some concrete suggestions, some of which we can see evident in the outreach programs of progressive educational institutions in our own era.

Whenever a societal institution of any kind takes on responsibility for adult learning, you see something of Lindeman's ideas at work. He was one of the first to urge public libraries to take on an adult education role. He encouraged sound adult education programs within labor unions, churches, women's clubs, and service organizations. He would applaud, I think, contemporary educational efforts to build humanistic educational arms within business and industry and other employer entities.

It would undoubtedly surprise Lindeman to see both formal and informal adult learning programs ongoing in shopping centers which hardly existed in his lifetime, but he would be pleased also. Much of so-called "nontraditional" education for adults with its instrumentalities designed to enable persons with adult responsibilities to learn at times and places of their convenience and in modes of their choosing is built upon Lindeman's assumptive base.

Finally, what about <u>public policy in adult education</u>? What would Eduard Lindeman have us do? For one thing, he thought adult educators and their clients ought to prod public and private agencies to do more adult education. Such organizations should also act as "pressures" (that is his word) on administrative and legislative bodies for the purpose of securing more financial support for adult education. There should, in short, be an adult education lobby.

Public policy regarding adult education, if it is in the Lindeman mode, would first of all facilitate voluntary adult learning. Forced adult education, like forced democracy, Lindeman considered to be a contradiction in terms.

Lindeman-inspired public policy would also not encourage the formal, credit-based system of adult education at the expense of informal or noncredit learning.

As a Deweyan pragmatist, Lindeman believed that the learning process itself

is important—certainly as important if not more so than the ends of learning. Lindeman died before the philosophy of B. F. Skinner showed itself in strength, but he certainly would not have been long on rigid behavioral objectives or objectives of any kind that did not take into account learning that might alter the desired ends. Goals or objectives should not, in his view, remain static awaiting realization. He would tell us to oppose public policy that emphasizes the ends of learning without comparable attention to the means of learning. (Eduard Lindeman would not be very successful in our own time, I'm afraid, as a writer of proposals for federal aid.)

Finally, Lindeman had something to say about the content of public policy as it affected America's international commitments. He believed strongly that nation states had the responsibility to encourage the development of curricula and programs designed to promote learning associated with world peace. It was possible, and essential, for citizens to learn how to make a just, orderly, and peaceful world—and to bring about a genuine intellectual and moral conviction on behalf of world government that would withstand the tensions of crisis. And, as he put it, "The only reliable instrument for establishing confidence among nations is adult education."

What I've stated is certainly far from all of Eduard Lindeman's agenda for American adult educators, but I think this sample can give you its essence. Assuming Lindeman's ideas are good ideas, his values good values, and his methods good methods, where should we go in this, his centennial year? We have, I think, some unique opportunities to make good things happen.

For nearly all of its history in the United States, the adult education movement has been marginal as compared with the largely school-based elementary, secondary, and higher education enterprise. Adult educators generally have been consigned to peripheral roles. There are a number of reasons for this, but most of them stem at their roots from two notions that have been thoroughly ingrained in the American psyche. These are that education is for the young and that the only education worth anything is school based.

But events are overtaking the traditional purveyors and spokespersons for institutionalized—and some might say calcified—American education. The baby boom generation is middle-aged. This group exists in such large numbers that it is in a position to make demands upon society—and to insist upon the satisfaction of those demands. We learned that, did we not, in the sixties? And in middle age, the baby boomers are demanding opportunities that meet their educational needs as adults. They want educational opportunities that can lead to career change—toward jobs that are satisfying to them—and not necessarily toward jobs that are defined by someone else. They want education that can help them solve life's problems and realize life's opportunities. They want to grow as persons. In short, they want to be fulfilled as human beings.

Thomas Jefferson had a wonderful phrase for all of this. He called it the pursuit of happiness. He thought it so important that he got it inserted in the Declaration of Independence.

It seems to me that Eduard Lindeman's life-centered vision of adult education

that begins with situations, not subjects; that values and builds upon human experience; and that facilitates the pursuit of happiness over the whole span of a person's life, exerts a powerful appeal to the great group of American men and women now entering early middle life. Reduced to its common denominator, the Lindeman agenda spells out a society that would make a leap of faith to value all learning for its own sake—with the act of learning itself becoming a national treasure. I think if this case can be made to our new middle-agers, we'll find ready listeners and eager learners—and a formidable adult learning lobby.

I wonder in any event what would happen if Lindeman's dream of lifelong and life-centered education for all Americans were implemented? If any man or woman could learn or try to learn anything, any way, most any time. If schools were only a part of the resources available for such learning? If gratification of each individual's educational aspirations, no matter how idiosyncratic, were an unquestioned right of any person in our society?

And what if there were systematic attention to these concerns—as evidenced by societal commitment of resources and rewards comparable to those now lavished on a school-based, credentialized, youth-oriented system? Would it make a better world?

No one know. It's never been tried.